

## Seeking more Mentors and Workplaces

The **Given The Chance** project connects refugees without networks and little knowledge of how to access employment, with Australians who do have these things. Launched September 2002 with 17 refugees, there are now over 250 individuals and 36 workplaces involved as employers or work experience providers. 42 of the refugees have gained jobs, 64 have had work experience, 22 have had tutoring and 100-plus refugees have been matched with a mentor. A simple idea, with benefits all round: our mentors say they gain the satisfaction of giving something back, recognition of their own richness of opportunities – some mentors have refugee backgrounds - and the chance to meet someone very different from themselves. For many mentors it is also a way to protest against the government's detention of asylum seekers.

Feedback from current mentors: *'really good experience' / 'I want to do more, to take on a second mentee' / 'I soon lost my fear of seeming patronising' / 'appreciation of my own opportunities' / 'I think my mentee has gained belief she can make a life here'*

Other ways of supporting the project's work include: offering work experience or traineeships for refugees, making a donation (tax deductible), volunteering in the project office, inviting a refugee to speak, displaying our project photographs.

### **The Refugees**

The refugees are mostly in their 20's and 30's. Most are seeking work, some are studying at TAFE. Some older ones have qualifications and professional experience from their home countries; younger refugees rarely do: due to war their education has been very disrupted. Some have been here a few months, others for years. Most come here under the Humanitarian program, which means they arrive with permanent residency and access to settlement services. They come mostly from Africa – Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and also the former Yugoslavia. A small number are asylum seekers mostly from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, who came here 'unofficially' and been released from detention on temporary or bridging visas. All the refugees have work rights.

We will give you information on the home country of the refugee we match you with. Useful websites include: [www.nceltr.mq.edu.au](http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au) / pdamep/factsheets/09CountryProfile.

Each with their own unique story, they share the hope of freedom and a better life here. Their resilience, courage, vision of a better future and capacity to take risks are qualities we value and welcome.

### **How are refugees matched with mentors?**

Matching is made mostly on the basis of linking the mentor's professional skills with the employment field the refugee hopes to enter. Matching is almost always same gender; women with women, men with men. Because we try to match to skills, it may take some time.

### **Time commitment re mentoring**

Meetings with mentees should be about 1 hour a week for the first month or so to get to know each other; then ongoing fortnightly meetings for about a year. Most mentors

continue for longer than this, sometimes re-matching with other refugees. 80% of the original mentors are still involved after 3 years.

### ***Induction and Support from Us***

Induction is held twice a year, across 2 evenings after work hours. It's a stimulating fun workshop, with skills development you might find useful also in your professional life. You will also hear from experienced mentors and refugee mentees. You don't need to wait until after Induction to be matched.

Monthly network meetings are held for mentors to meet each other, hear about others' experiences, handling of issues, etc. We also sometimes have speakers, or focus on skills development. Suggestions are welcome.

### ***Mentoring***

The purpose of the mentoring is to foster a sense of confidence and connection for the refugees, to assist them to name their strengths, clarify their goals and how to achieve them. The longer term purpose is for the refugees to achieve satisfying employment, often via study, as a crucial part of settlement and building connections. You will act as a cultural translator, advise on finding information, accessing resources, creating and recognising opportunities. Listening skills, interest in and sensitivity to cultural differences, patience, empathy and the ability to encourage and sustain are key skills.

The mentoring is not about language skills: the only entry requirement into the program for refugees is medium competence with spoken English. Sometimes the refugee may need coaching in English for a specific purpose, eg for an interview for a course, or for work.

As a mentor you don't need to know the answers to all possible questions, but to empower your mentee to find the answers her/him self. We provide you with information about resources and referral agencies: and recommend our Refugee Resources booklet for \$10.

Generally the refugee travels to meet the mentor, often at a café or park near the mentor's workplace or home. Some mentors take their mentee into their workplace or to visit community venues such as libraries, galleries, parks, etc, or into their home for meals, to meet their family. Others keep to meeting for an hour or so on a weekday. Your degree of involvement is up to you and depends on your and your mentee's personal situations.

### ***Mentors***

Like the refugees, the mentors come from a huge range of backgrounds. Ages range from 22 to 70, most are in paid work, chiefly the private sector, some are studying, or retired.

In the attached application form we also ask if you might be able to provide any work experience opportunities, traineeships, or paid casual work for refugees.

*Many thanks for your interest. If you have any queries, please ring Jill or Susan on 9416 0044. We hope to receive your Mentor application form soon!*



The information requested below is confidential to the program.
Could you complete & return this to jcarr@bsl.org.au or post to Given the Chance/EMC, PO Box 1389, Collingwood 3066. Any queries please call 9416 0044

Office Use: Date Received: Date Matched: Matched with:

Which elements of our Given The Chance project are you interested in? Please tick:

- Mentoring
Offering Work: jobs / experience / traineeships / casual paid (see p5)
Volunteering in project office: desktop publishing, marketing skills especially welcome
Sponsorship of projects or refugees (donations tax deductible)

\* \* \*

MENTOR APPLICATION

1. Telephone / Mobile:.....

2. Address: .....

3. Email: .....

4. Gender ..... Approx age (relevant to matching) .....

5. Postal Address .....

6. Are you: employed f/t - p/t student retired mix of these

7. Your current / previous workplaces, job roles, etc;
.....
.....
.....

8. Your skills & areas of expertise
.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Have you mentored before? Yes No

If Yes, could you provide some details:

.....
.....
.....

10. Have you mentored anyone from a culturally diverse background before? Yes No

If Yes, could you provide some details

.....  
 .....

11. Do you speak any languages other than English?

.....  
 .....

12. Do you have a preference re nationality to mentor?

.....  
 .....

13. Would you prefer to mentor a refugee with:

Citizenship    Temporary visa    Asylum seeker    Don't mind

**Mentoring Meetings:** Time & Place: with mentors who work full time generally the refugees travel to meet near the mentors' workplace at lunchtime: most refugees do not have cars so use public transport to meet; where the refugee has small children, some mentors meet in the refugee's home; what is your preference? (Please circle)

Lunchtime near .....    Weekend    Flexible    Can travel to refugee

14. What kind of resources or opportunities might you also be able to offer? (eg visits to workplace, computer skills)

.....  
 .....

15. Could you outline your interest in refugee issues & what has prompted you to volunteer?

.....  
 .....

16. Do you agree to:

undergo a police check if this becomes policy? Yes No

your contact details being made available to the mentor network? Yes No

participate in publicity for the project, be photographed, etc Yes No Maybe

17. Could you provide the name & contact for a referee:

Name ..... Ph:.....

Connection with you .....

18. How did you hear about this project?.....

19. Any other information you would like to add

.....  
 .....

***Many thanks. Please return to the Given the Chance Program as above;  
 Or continue for Work Opportunities for Refugees***

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### Work Opportunities for Refugees

1. Telephone / Mobile:.....

2. Address: .....

3. Email: .....

4. Gender ..... Approx age (relevant to matching) .....

5. Postal Address .....

6. Are you employed full time / part time student retired mix of these

7. Your current / previous workplaces, job roles, etc;

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

8. Which of the following are you interested in possibly providing? Please Tick.

- Work experience which might lead to a traineeship**     **work experience**
- Paid casual**                       **Shadowing**

9. Please describe the kind/s of work (eg admin, manual, hospitality, etc)

.....

10. Workplace environment (eg large / small office, factory, school, etc)

.....  
.....

Location .....

Supervision: if someone other than yourself would supervise, her/his name, job title, contact details:

.....  
.....

11. **Shadowing:** having a refugee follow you in your workplace in the following sorts of activities

.....  
.....

12. **Traineeships:** does your workplace offer them?      Yes              No

Yes - in these areas:

.....

13. Other work experience possibilities / ideas / contacts you may be able to offer:

.....  
.....

**With thanks**